

**ABSTRACT**

5 The invention provides a system, method, and business model for an information system and service having business self-promotion, audio coupon, ratings, and other features. A business or organization in which consumers call into a service using an ordinary telephone, PC, PDA, or other information appliance, and make requests in plain speech for information on goods and/or services, and the service provides responses to the request in plain speech in real-time. Provides an operating model for a telephone-based audio-interfaced goods and services information and referral service having merchant self-promotion features, including database provider storing merchant information; an interface for inputting merchant information into the database and for retrieving and editing the information; and an interface for inputting voice commands and data and for receiving merchant information and processed information from the database in response to the input voice commands and data. The invention provides a system including: a speech-to-text conversion engine converting speech-based input commands and data received from an external device over a communication link into text-based commands and data; a data base storing a plurality of data items; a search engine searching the database for a particular data item in response to the text-based command and data; a text-to-speech conversion engine generating a speech-based representation of the particular data item identified in the database search; and a speech server for communicating the speech-based representation of the particular data item to the external device.

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